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An Insight
into Migrants' and their Children's
Participation in Food
(Belgium, Food2Gather project)

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F2G blog



About *Food2Gather*

- a european Participatory Action Research in social sciences
- addressing food as a potential driver for intercultural communication & interaction // for inclusion and exclusion processes in european societies
- with partners from the civil society
- ethnographic methods
- based on the concept of "foodscape"

Food2gather in Belgium

- identify and document the place of food in the daily life of children and their family applying for asylum: an anthropological approach
- a 2 years long ethnography at a reception center for asylum seekers and at school (primary and kindergarten)
- what are the ways and limits of migrants' participation? How do power relationships impact migrants' daily life?



The Reception center

- Food is provided to residents through a canteen system supplied by a catering company
- Resident have to conform to the menu, the hours, and system of distribution of the meals
- The reception centre also has a collective kitchen where the residents can cook their dishes but they don't receive extra money to shop for groceries.



The school

- different breaks when children can eat: 1 in the morning when they eat snacks, lunchtime, and 1 break in the afternoon
- For lunchtime, children bring their own lunchbox with sandwiches also called "tartines"

~~canteen~~



Cherifa and her children's testimony:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cpDojGIOTlw>

A "low-key" food participation

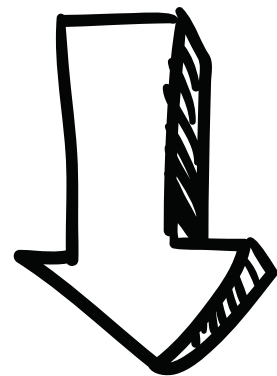
Aïcha, schooled in a DASPA class, confidentially shows me that she has got a big chewing-gum roll for the playtime. It's lunchtime and I ask her why she doesn't eat her « tartine » rather than her gum. She answers with a mischievous look that she doesn't like her chocolate sandwiches while hiding from the teacher. But the teacher saw her and asks to keep it in her bag because this kind of food is forbidden at school (Fieldwork notes, M. Vivier, 15/10/2019).

- The reception center as the school value the "autonomy" of children and parents while offering limited conditions for experiencing autonomous parenthood and childhood.
- a vision of the "good" migrant parent and the "good" migrant child
- This kind of participation can be used to measure the parents or children's commitment to an integration process while the migrant's ordinary participation often remains invisible.
- the lack of participation in food issues of concern to migrants deeply impacts many other areas of life: parenthood and childhood, sense of home, of being and belonging, schooling at large.
- Thus, migrants develop strategies to overcome these injunctions and try to participate in their own food issues.

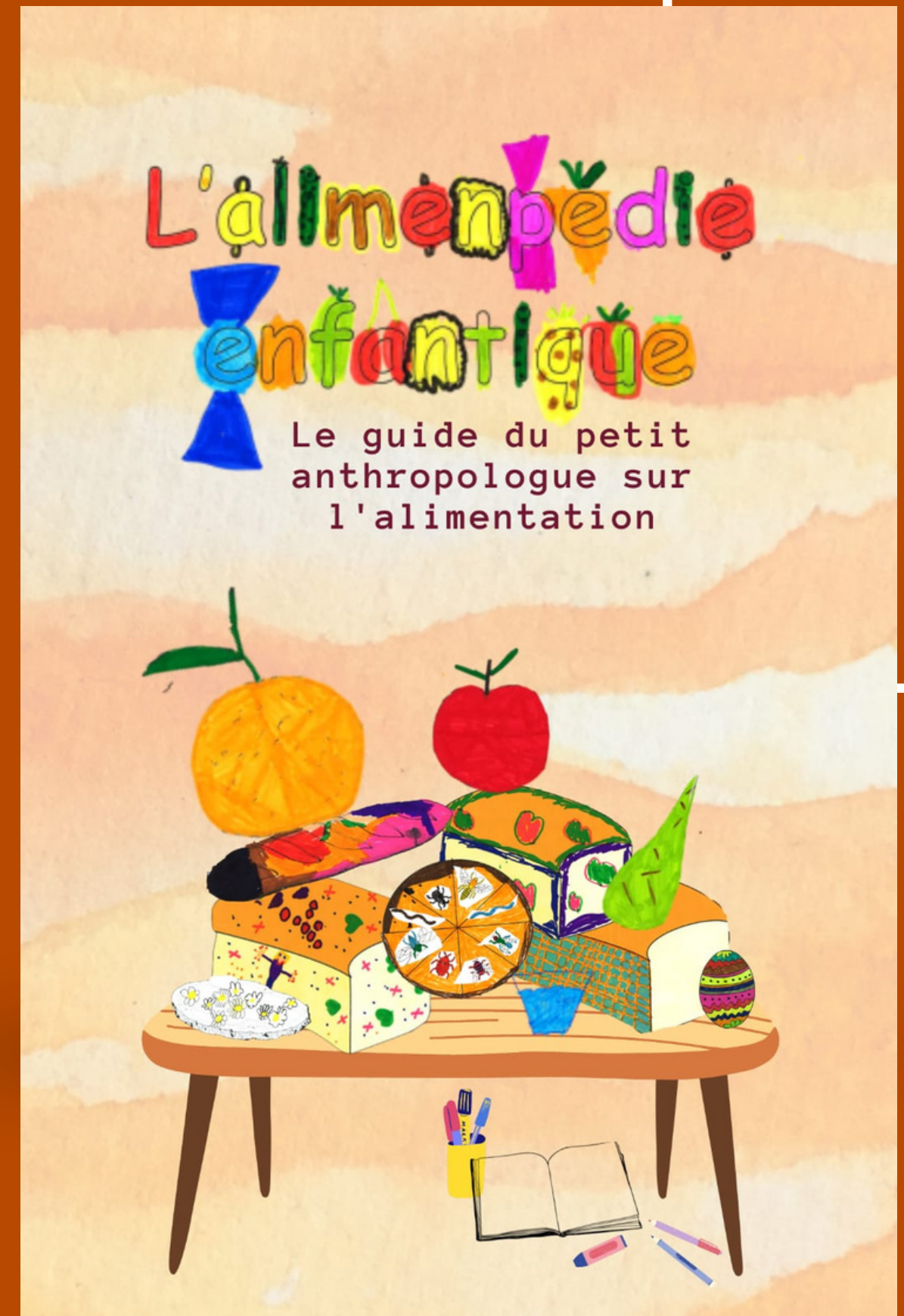
F2G, promoting a genuine participation ?

At school

Workshops on food issues focusing on the social and cultural dimension of food



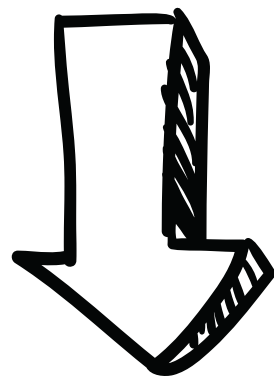
An encyclopaedia on food developed with the children: "The childic foodpaedia" and an exhibition



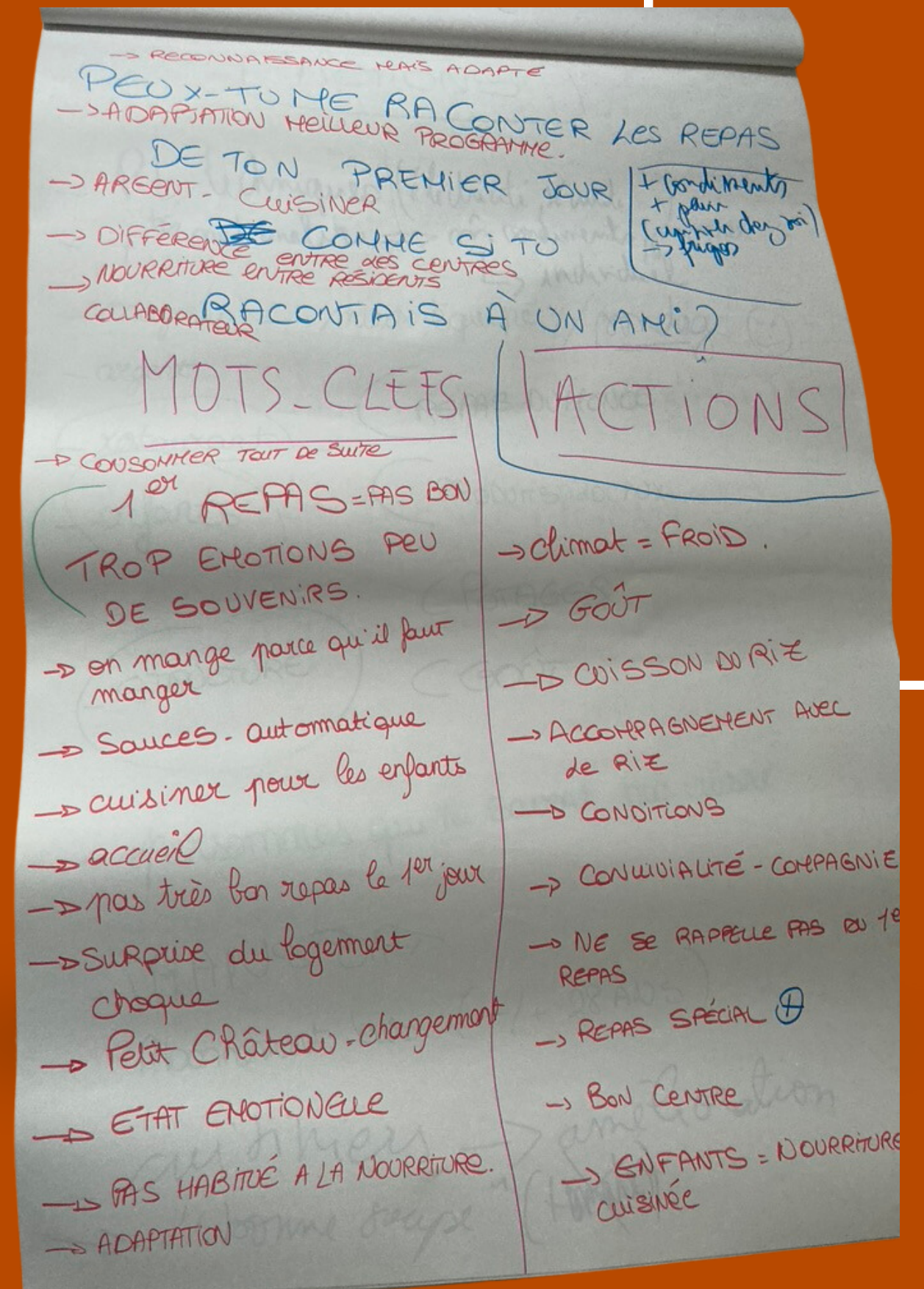
F2G: promoting a genuine participation?

At the reception center

Workshops with residents and social workers on food issues at the center



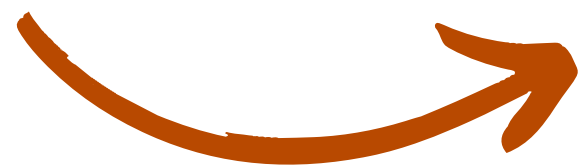
A letter and 21 recommendations written with residents to improve food and hospitality in the centre.



Conclusion

- Addressing the issue of participation through the study of food is revealing
- The injunctions concerning participation in the field of food are often contradictory.
- different definitions of participation

Food2Gather blog



THANK YOU

for listening to our Presentation

